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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Eleventh session
New York, 12–14 June 2018

Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 14 June 2018, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Panayotov ..... (Bulgaria)

Contents

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

Agenda item 6: Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention

Agenda item 7: Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

Agenda item 8: Closing of the meeting

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Agbonon** (Togo) said that there were close to 900,000 persons with disabilities in Togo, out of a total population of more than 7 million. Since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, his Government had mainstreamed disability issues and had taken large-scale action to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

2. At the legislative level, a revised draft law on the social protection of persons with disabilities was under review. At the strategic level, the 2018–2020 programme budget of the Ministry of Social Action, Social Promotion and Literacy had taken into consideration the concerns of persons with disabilities, particularly in the areas related to strengthening the access of vulnerable people to a protective and enabling environment, preventing poverty and enhancing the accessibility of basic social services. In addition, a social and professional integration programme for persons with disabilities had been developed; the national community-based action policy, which addressed the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, had been revised; and inclusive education had been integrated into the teacher training curriculum.

3. A total of 10 specialized care centres for children with intellectual disabilities had been fully subsidized. Subsidies had likewise been increased for 17 specialized institutes responsible for children with other disabilities. Six hundred and forty-four teachers had been trained in inclusive education, while 295 health workers and 143 social workers had received training on disability issues, inclusive community development and gender. His Government had supported the financial empowerment of 2,109 parents of children with disabilities, including 1,597 women through village credit and savings organizations. Togo had also implemented a project for decent work for persons with disabilities for the period 2017–2020.

4. **Ms. Zeggar** (France) said that ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in all sectors of social and economic life was one of the key tenets of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons adopted in 1982. Disability issues must not be treated as exceptions, but in the context of normal service provision. Accordingly, French public policies had been implemented to provide medical and social support for persons with disabilities.

5. The first interministerial conference on disability of the current presidency had recently been held, which reflected the national prioritization of disability issues. Her Government sought to develop collective disability solutions according to individual needs and by drawing on the expertise of persons with disabilities and their families. France had also welcomed the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities in October 2017 and had taken note of her observations.

6. To have an effective impact on the lived experience of persons with disabilities, it was necessary to invest in all sectors: education, employment, housing, health, urban planning and transport accessibility, as well as sports, culture and leisure. Her Government was finalizing specific plans on autism, visual disabilities, deafness and hearing impairments, and psychiatry and mental health. All students, regardless of disability, were guaranteed an education by law. Thanks to partnerships between schools and specialized institutions, students with disabilities enjoyed longer and more varied academic trajectories.

7. In terms of transport and housing, the public authorities wished to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in urban centres, in part by mapping out 100 per cent accessible transport routes and removing administrative obstacles that prevented individuals from finding accessible housing options. In the light of the upcoming 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, the French national railway service had pledged to invest 870 million euros in transport accessibility.

8. Further efforts should be made to enhance employment options and contract length for persons with disabilities by developing training and apprenticeship programmes and providing incentives for hiring persons with disabilities.

9. **Mr. Diakite** (Mauritania) said that his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2012, and since then had implemented national legislation to apply the relevant provisions, with a particular focus on public housing, transport and communications; a quota system had been established to hire persons with disabilities in the public sector.

10. Describing a number of national efforts designed to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Mauritania, he said that the families of children with disabilities received monthly cash transfers, technical support and financial subsidies for equipment and orthopaedics.

11. Mauritania had recently submitted its initial report in accordance with article 35 of the Convention (CPRD/C/MRT/1) to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Persons with disabilities were represented in the national parliament as well as in local councils.

12. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that her country had made great strides in implementing its Vision 2030 programme, which called for equality and justice for all members of society, including persons with disabilities. Qatar worked to raise awareness among persons with disabilities about their rights, and had allocated resources towards promoting equal participation by persons with disabilities in a wide range of fields, with some 34 agencies offering services geared towards various types of disability. Her Government had recently launched a National Autism Plan for 2017–2021. The Mada Assistive Technology Center, which had been established to help implement her country's digital inclusion strategy, had hosted the Gulf Region Education Assistive Technology Conference in April 2018. The government agencies that worked to integrate persons with disabilities into society relied on data provided by the Qatari Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, which had conducted its most recent survey on the needs of persons with disabilities in October 2017. Her country would spare no effort in carrying out its commitments under the Convention.

13. **Mr. Bowden** (Observer for People with Disability Australia) said that the theme of leaving no one behind was critical to ensure that all persons with disabilities benefited equally from the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, there were specific groups of persons with disabilities who experienced multidimensional and intersectional discrimination that had yet to be addressed by the Committee. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) persons experienced intersectional discrimination that resulted in greater social exclusion, isolation, violence, forced medical interventions and the denial of the ability to form relationships. Although the intersection between sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status and disability had largely not been addressed yet, his organization welcomed recent efforts by the Committee to incorporate LGBTQIA+ issues.

14. In order to leave no one behind, States must incorporate the jurisprudence of the Convention, along with the general comments of all human rights mechanisms and the recommendations of the Human Rights Council, into domestic legislation. LGBTQIA+ persons with disabilities must be able to enjoy their human rights on an equal basis and build partnerships with other civil society organizations representing persons with disabilities. All laws discriminating against LGBTQIA+ persons with disabilities, their bodies and their relationships must be abolished and all barriers to inclusion must be eliminated.

15. **Mr. Robinson** (Observer for the Commonwealth) said that, in the communiqué of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, held in London from 16 to 20 April 2018, the 53 Commonwealth Heads of Government had agreed to address the stigma around disability and had encouraged all member countries to ratify and implement the Convention. The Commonwealth would help member States to translate that commitment into action.

16. Of the 53 Commonwealth countries, 32 were small States. Concerted action was required from the international community to address the unique challenges and vulnerabilities of small States, such as climate change, to ensure their full participation and contribution to the Convention. The Commonwealth would support small States to achieve a fairer future for all.

17. A total of 60 per cent of the Commonwealth population was under the age of 30. Through its youth programme, the Commonwealth would continue to work with youth leaders to address the issues faced by young persons with disabilities. The Commonwealth Youth Council had been leading a campaign to challenge the stigma against young persons with disabilities and had hosted a conference on that subject in partnership with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda. Young people in the Commonwealth were determined to fulfil the Convention, including through the production and implementation of toolkits to support national youth councils and student associations in becoming more inclusive organizations.

18. Under the right circumstances, sport had the power to improve the overall status of persons with disabilities by improving their quality of life and enhancing their physical and mental health, and could help to manage stigma and discrimination in society.

19. **Ms. Tarbush** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation had recognized a need to empower persons with disabilities and acknowledge their contributions. That change in perspective had led the State of Palestine to add the pillar of empowerment to its strategy for the social protection sector for 2014–2016 and to review existing legislation on disability. A national committee, led by the Ministry of Social Development and members from civil society and various ministries, was working to modernize that law and expand its scope.

20. National policies and the budget would reflect the new orientation through aid, customs exemptions and soft loans. The Central Bureau of Statistics was elaborating the indicators necessary to guide policymakers, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education had contributed to that national effort by adopting an inclusive education policy. A new strategic plan for local government included provisions for community integration of persons with disabilities.

21. The State of Palestine was finalizing its initial report on the implementation of the Convention and would hold national consultations with all relevant civil society actors, including organizations of persons with disabilities. It had decided to include the movement of persons with disabilities in all national consultations on human rights treaties in the future.

22. **Mr. Diaby** (Guinea) said that, although persons with disabilities were portrayed as being unable to take care of themselves, the needs of the majority of persons with disabilities could be met by ordinary services, through awareness-raising, changing attitudes and making practical adjustments. Persons with disabilities demanded only the promotion of their human rights and respect for their specific rights.

23. Promising measures had been taken by the Government in collaboration with organizations for the protection of persons with disabilities. The Government's economic and social development plan included support for persons with disabilities among its development priorities, with an emphasis on developing human capital and tackling social exclusion and inequalities and specific reference to the employment and entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities. Following the successful celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2017, the development of the law on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities had been accelerated. After its adoption by the Government, the law had been promulgated unanimously by the presidential party and the opposition in parliament on 15 May 2018. When implemented, the law would benefit not only persons with disabilities but also their families and communities.

24. A major challenge was the fact that, according to the data available, persons with disabilities were not simply marginalized but also a marginal entity, comprising 1.5 per cent of the global population. Social workers should be equipped to care for persons with disabilities. At the moment, however, there was little room in the budget for social work.

25. **Ms. Skhiladze** (Observer for the Public Defender of Georgia) said that, despite the positive steps taken by the Government of Georgia, the effective implementation of the Convention remained a serious challenge in her country. The Government had failed to create an effective enforcement mechanism, and Parliament had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Challenges remained in the following areas: the harmonization of national legislation with the requirements of the Convention; the implementation of a social model for assessing disability; the access of persons with disabilities to social protection and health care; the realization of their right to adequate housing; the employment of persons with disabilities; the accessibility of the physical environment, infrastructure, transport and information; the insufficient collection of data and statistics concerning persons with disabilities; the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life; and inclusive education. The participation of national human rights institutions in the meetings of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was important for sharing experiences, raising issues and increasing the accountability of Governments to improve the implementation of international commitments.

26. **Ms. Abou Khalil** (Observer for Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities) said that many countries in the Middle East, including the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, suffered from cycles of violence that did not spare civilians or persons with disabilities. In addition, the Palestinian people were suffering from the worst forms of oppression, humiliation and violence in the Occupied Territories, and from extreme deprivation in refugee camps. Many injuries and disabilities had been provoked by serious violence and forced displacement throughout the region. Member States and all disability advocates must work together to put an end to the tragedy in the Middle East, particularly the lamentable conditions for persons with disabilities in refugee camps.

27. Many countries represented by her organization had ratified the Convention, but implementation was lagging behind. Many Arab countries still had insufficient care policies and continued to deprive persons with disabilities, especially women, of their basic rights to education and health care. Persons with disabilities were already excluded from society in many places, and in the Middle East they were also subject to violence and displacement.

28. **Ms. Menadbe** (Observer for the World Health Organization (WHO)) said that WHO was strongly committed to the full implementation of the Convention and considered universal health coverage its top priority, with a view to ensuring access to health services for all including persons with disabilities.

29. Approximately 1 billion people — or 15 per cent of the global population — were persons with disabilities; of those, 190 million adults faced significant difficulties in everyday life. The World Health Survey had indicated that disability was 60 per cent higher among women, and that women with disabilities received fewer screenings for breast and cervical cancer, had reduced access to sexual education and were almost four times more likely to be victims of violence. In general, about half of all persons with disabilities could not afford the health care and services they needed.

30. The vision of WHO was that all individuals, regardless of health condition, impairment or disability status, should receive the health services they required without suffering any financial hardship. In accordance with its Global Disability Action Plan for 2014–2021, WHO was working to ensure that persons with disabilities benefited from universal health coverage.

31. Two efforts were currently underway to remove barriers to health services for persons with disabilities. First, WHO had designed a rehabilitation support package and was providing technical support to 13 Member States implementing the package. Second, WHO had launched a priority assistive products list; both the list and the rehabilitation support package were promoted as elements of universal health coverage. In collaboration with the World Bank, WHO was helping more than 20 countries to implement the Model Disability Survey to ensure quality data collection on disabilities, as well as its effective use to inform policies.

Agenda item 6: Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention

32. **The President** said that the panellists would provide briefings on their work to support Member States and major stakeholders in promoting inclusive development and the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities.

33. **Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), panellist, speaking on behalf of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, said that six women had been elected for the first time to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the General Assembly had recently adopted resolution 72/162, the first ever on the situation of women and girls with disabilities, and the first woman expert with a disability had been elected to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Welcoming those historic achievements, she said that the United Nations system now had a timely opportunity to enhance collaboration between the disability movement and the women's movement, and to engage young people in its efforts.

34. An estimated 15 per cent of the world's population had a disability and one in five women were estimated to have a disability worldwide. Like gender, disability was a frequent source of intersectionality; unfortunately, persons with disabilities remained largely excluded from the broader conversation. In keeping with the principle of "nothing about us without us", UN-Women was finalizing its strategy on gender equality, which focused on targeted actions to ensure the inclusion and participation of women and girls with disabilities, as well as the mainstreaming of gender and the rights of persons with disabilities across all sectors. The strategy would be launched in September 2018 on the margins of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

35. UN-Women had published an issue brief explaining how the Sustainable Development Goals and targets applied to women and girls with disabilities; it had also included a section on women and girls with disabilities in its monitoring report, together with disaggregated data on achievements and challenges. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women would announce the list of grantees selected to address violence against women and girls with disabilities in July 2018, marking the first time that the mechanism had been able to target women and girls with disabilities. UN-Women was also working with civil society organizations via a number of inter-agency and multi-stakeholder mechanisms such as its civil society advisory groups, the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention, the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Global Action on Disability Network.

36. Speaking as the Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention, she said that the Group's annual meeting had been held on the margins of the Commission on the Status of Women and had involved the participation of many rural women. The Group's membership had increased from 8 to 25 agencies; however, more active engagement by more entities was still needed, including at the highest levels. The best results were achieved when leadership at the highest level was accompanied by funding and accountability mechanisms.

37. **Mr. Harris** (United Nations Chief Economist and Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic

and Social Affairs), panellist, said that his Department was the global focal point on disability in the United Nations system and its work focused on promoting the objectives of the Convention by mainstreaming disability in the 2030 Agenda; providing evidence-based policy guidance and building multi-stakeholder partnerships for the implementation of the Convention; and enhancing the capacity of Governments to develop disability-inclusive policies and strategies for development.

38. In the light of the recent reform of the United Nations system, the Department had reorganized its subprogrammes to better support Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda and other development agendas, while focusing on disability issues and identifying interlinkages between the Convention and the Agenda. With support from the Department, a General Assembly resolution on the situation of women and girls with disabilities had been adopted at its seventy-second session. The Department had continued with the preparation of the first ever United Nations flagship report on disability and development, in collaboration with experts from Member States, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, organizations of persons with disabilities and research institutes. As the first publication on disability and the Sustainable Development Goals at the global level, the report would ultimately provide an evidence base for progress towards the disability-inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

39. The Department had fostered coordination among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in support of the Convention; it had also helped to mobilize financial resources for the United Nations country teams to implement joint programmes with a view to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities on the ground. At the national level, the Department continued to support the capacity of Governments to establish disability-inclusive legislation, policies and programmes in accordance with the Convention, and to provide training for government officials and organizations of persons with disabilities. One of the key areas of technical cooperation in 2017 had been disability statistics, in response to the call in the 2030 Agenda for data disaggregated by disability and statistical capacity-building.

40. The Department had increased its collection and use of disability data through regional workshops and the provision of technical assistance. The six regional and subregional meetings organized in the previous two years had brought together 191 participants from 89 countries, including representatives from national statistical offices and government agencies in charge of disability policies. The United Nations Statistical Division had collected disability data from 104 countries and was working on a web portal that would enable the visualization of those data.

41. The Department was working to update the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics in line with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. The revised publication would provide guidance on how to produce disability statistics and would enable countries to better meet demands for good quality data to measure and monitor progress towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development. The Department would continue to help developing countries with statistical capacity-building, taking into account the analytical results compiled globally by the Statistical Division and the revised Guidelines. It would also continue to support the efforts of Member States and other major stakeholders to make progress in disability-inclusive development in line with the Convention, the 2030 Agenda and other relevant global commitments.

42. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), panellist, said that it was only through concerted efforts that policies, action plans and an accountability framework could be developed to strengthen system-wide accessibility and mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities. Coordination must be improved to align policies across the system, to invest in capacity-building, to strengthen partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities, and to embrace a United Nations vision that included persons with disabilities in all roles, from the role of United Nations volunteers to the post of Secretary-General.

43. To fully implement the Convention and leave no one behind, Member States must change their policies, ensure that budget and resource allocations were consistent with the Convention, and avoid investing in practices which served to entrench segregation and exclusion. Systems must be redesigned to enable and empower persons with disabilities and move them towards sustainable development. While much of that responsibility was incumbent on States, the private sector, United Nations agencies and entities must also contribute to strengthening such systems, including for women and girls with disabilities.

44. Women and girls with disabilities continued to fall through the cracks of the disability agenda on one side, and the agenda of gender equality on the other. Women and girls with disabilities must participate across all agendas, and all barriers to their participation, including

laws, policies and practices that propagated multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, must be removed.

45. He welcomed the election of six women to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and commended States for their efforts to achieve gender balance. Inclusion could not be taken for granted. Women and men with disabilities must therefore have the same opportunities to lead and to decide who their leaders were. Participation in public and political life was not only a right, but a democratic imperative which strengthened communities. Laws and practices restricting or denying the legal capacity of persons with disabilities, or their right to vote and stand for election, threatened democracy. All information, communications and processes must be made accessible to ensure that persons with disabilities could participate on an equal basis.

46. It was imperative to address the data deficit and heed the call of the 2030 Agenda for data disaggregation. OHCHR reiterated its support for the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability and the Washington Group/United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Module on Child Functioning as the only available tools that could significantly increase the availability of timely, reliable and high-quality disaggregated data. States should make use of those tools during the upcoming census round to establish the necessary baseline to measure the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals on persons with disabilities.

47. **Mr. Lounio** (Observer for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that UNDP worked worldwide to support Governments in their efforts to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had provided the United Nations system with a tool to uphold the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure more equitable access to the Sustainable Development Goals. Given that progress towards achieving the Goals and implementing the Convention was mutually reinforcing, UNDP was working to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities across all its development programmes. It had also issued specific guidance to all country offices and was updating many policy tools and guidance. The recently approved Strategic Plan 2018–2021 required all new country programme documentation to mainstream the needs of persons with disabilities.

48. UNDP was proud to continue hosting the technical secretariat of the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which organized joint programmes in more than 35 countries and launched regional initiatives. UNDP would continue to support system-wide policies and accountability through the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

49. **Ms. Bogopane-Zulu** (South Africa) said that it would be a mistake to say that the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability provided the only means of collecting disability data. Although the Washington Group questions offered a broad framework, it was important for individual nations to design country-specific data collection systems.

50. On a separate matter, she wished to note that while the Human Rights Council had a resolution on discrimination against albinism, the United Nations system as a whole did not take that issue seriously enough. On the African continent, persons with albinism were frequently and brutally murdered, a reality which had never been addressed by the Security Council. Furthermore, despite the fact that International Albinism Awareness Day coincided every year with the Conference of States Parties, the matter was never included in its agenda.

51. **Mr. Alzubair** (Observer for Peace and Tolerance International Organization) said that least developed countries faced serious difficulties with regard to the implementation of the Convention, especially because of a lack of statistics and thus of the ability to measure the progress made. Tools and mechanisms must be developed to remedy those difficulties, as well as the obstacles faced by least developed countries in terms of health care, education and other sectors implicated by provisions of the Convention. Barriers to the participation of regional organizations must be eliminated so that they could help individual countries set up task forces. Regional organizations like the African Union must play a direct role in the implementation of the Convention and serve as the front line for monitoring progress.

52. **Ms. Bonilla** (El Salvador) said that State institutions were increasingly developing programmes in terms of education, labour and development. Her country had implemented accessible design in 36 education centres, including ramps, parking lots and recreational areas. Thirteen accessible walkways had also been planned as part of the expansion of the coastal highway. Private companies were incentivized to provide jobs to persons with disabilities. UNICEF had supported a national survey on persons with disabilities in 2015. With the help of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), her country had developed a national plan for access to information and communications

technology (ICT) for persons with disabilities. Agencies should consider the creation of local offices to better address the needs of persons with disabilities.

53. **Ms. Sall-Beye** (Observer for the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that, under its strategic goal of digital inclusion, ITU worked with Governments to support the development of accessibility policies and regulations for ICT; with industry to define and manufacture accessible ICT; with public and private sector partners to ensure that ICT services were accessible, affordable and equitable; and with academics to empower people through technology education and training. As part of its focus on capacity-building, ITU provided training courses and resources on the accessibility of ICT, including a national programme on web accessibility and the model ICT accessibility policy report. Reports, recommendations, guidelines and good practices were also available to support the implementation of ICT accessibility policies and services at the country level.

54. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that he agreed that it was important to raise the profile of the human rights of persons with albinism. In addition to supporting the work of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, OHCHR had reported to the Human Rights Council and conducted public information and advocacy initiatives on that issue.

55. OHCHR supported the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, which ensured the reliability and comparability of data. Diverse approaches, methodologies and standards were currently being used, leading some countries to report that 20 per cent of the population had a disability, while others reported only 1 per cent. The tradition of invisibility was a key challenge that needed to be addressed in the advancement of the human rights of persons with disabilities. A standardized tool would reveal the situation across regions, countries and communities, allowing progress to be measured in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the fulfilment of obligations under the Convention. The Washington Group questions enjoyed broad support because of their rigorous methodology. It was important to ensure the availability of statistical capacity, particularly for developing and least developed countries.

56. **Mr. Kabir** (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), speaking on behalf of Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, who had had to leave, said that the theme of the 2019 session of the Commission on the Status of Women would be social protection and infrastructure — two areas in which persons with disabilities were largely absent. Capacity and momentum therefore needed to be built at the country level. The women's movement was currently separate from the disability movement. Unifying those two movements would be beneficial to both. Greater effort would be made to address intersectionality in 2018 and 2019.

57. **Mr. Harris** (United Nations Chief Economist and Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that, over the past year the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had tried to compile as much global data on disability as possible. It had used such data to inform its interventions at regional workshops that were aimed at proposing technical capacity support to enable Governments to collect disaggregated data. Through the revision of the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics, the Department had hoped to mobilize the international community to strengthen disaggregated data on persons with disabilities. In the context of the specific difficulties encountered by the least developed countries, the lack of consistent disaggregated data was a problem across all the Sustainable Development Goals. The Department would devote a great deal of time, effort and resources to strengthening the ability of countries to generate disaggregated data that were useful for measuring progress and informing the formulation of policies.

58. **Mr. Kabir** (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) said that there was a clear gap between commitment and action in the United Nations system, and a higher level of commitment was needed. He noted that the Secretary-General had made that commitment clear in his opening statement to the Conference. Resources were also needed in order to translate good will on the part of Member States into action. The United Nations system must work together to build a strong basis for system-wide efforts. UN-Women was also working with partners outside the United Nations because no single agency could deliver all the solutions to the problem of accessibility.

59. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that OHCHR would continue to work with partners to mainstream the human rights of persons with disabilities across the United Nations system. The most meaningful manifestation of partnership had been the Office's engagement with persons with disabilities and their organizations.

Despite all the progress that had been made, however, the United Nations needed to open the space even further, in general for civil society and in particular for organizations of persons with disabilities and persons with disabilities themselves.

60. **Ms. Degener** (Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), panellist, said that she was pleased to see universal ratification of the Convention on the horizon, with only 16 State parties that had yet to ratify it. Reaching almost universal ratification within the first decade was evidence that disability had finally become a human rights matter.

61. To date, the Committee had reviewed about 70 State party reports. Over the past years, dialogues had become more constructive. The main issues of concern were the denial of legal capacity and forced treatment, segregation in education, residential institutionalization, discrimination and exclusion from political and cultural participation. As examples of good practices, a significant number of countries had taken steps to reform their laws on legal guardianship and mental health, promising research and practice projects were under way in relation to supported decision-making, and progress had been made with regard to inclusive education and deinstitutionalization. The Committee had adopted six general comments containing guidance for States parties on implementing the Convention: No. 1 (2014) on equal recognition before the law; No. 2 (2014) on accessibility; No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities; No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education; No. 5 (2017) on the right to independent living; and No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination. It was hoped that a general comment on articles 4.3 and 33.3 of the Convention, relating to the participation of persons with disabilities in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, would be adopted in 2018.

62. The Committee had strengthened its relationship with national human rights institutions. It had included in its concluding observations recommendations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee had begun to invite States parties that would be reviewed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development to mainstream disability in their voluntary reports and had included that recommendation in its concluding observations since its fifteenth session.

63. In 2017, she had reported that easy-read and plain-language versions of draft and adopted documents of the Committee were not provided because they were not budgeted for. In 2017–2018, however, the United Nations Office at Geneva had endeavoured to make the 14 core documents of the Committee, including its rules of procedure and working methods, available in plain English.

64. While significant steps had been taken towards the implementation of the Convention, certain developments at the regional level might undermine the human rights standard established by it. She therefore called upon all members of the Council of Europe to follow the example of Portugal by not ratifying the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders.

65. **Ms. Devandas Aguilar** (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities), panellist, said that accountability was not just limited to States: it was also essential for the United Nation system as a whole to be held accountable, and for civil society to access information transparently and monitor progress from the outside. She worked to promote accountability in the work of the United Nations on the rights of persons with disabilities, including through the development of a System-wide Disability Action Plan. If the recent plans to establish an accountability framework and an action plan to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities as proposed by the Secretary-General were adopted, that would mark an important turning point in the historical work of the Committee.

66. In recent years she had worked on thematic reports in which she had addressed the rights of persons with disabilities in the following six areas: social protection; participation in decision-making; disability-inclusive policies; access to rights-based support; sexual and reproductive health; and legal capacity reform and supported decision-making. The reports provided an overview of the current situation, demonstrated good practices, and gave States guidelines for future policy implementation. They had all been published in easy-reading format.

67. In 2017, she had visited France and Kazakhstan. Country visits were very important tools for cooperation and exchange, with a view to helping States identify and address challenges. She would continue to promote the exchange of knowledge between countries, United Nations entities and civil society, as well as the disaggregation of disability data. Presenting an overview of the various meetings she had organized and co-organized, she said that her mandate was to ensure better coordination so that the actions of the United Nations system would be more inclusive. It was impossible to improve the system without the increased participation of persons with disabilities. The

Conference was commended for its high degree of participation with regard to decision-making.

68. **Ms.** Zhiying **Ma** (One Plus One Group for Disability), panellist, said that, in the past 12 years, One Plus One had devoted itself to promoting the disability paradigm shift from the medical model to the social and rights models. In 2012, it had submitted an independent shadow report on the implementation by China of the Convention to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

69. The challenges facing women with disabilities in China and across the world included such factors as the grave shortage of data on women and girls with disabilities; the lower education levels, employment rates and socioeconomic status of women with disabilities compared with persons without disabilities and men with disabilities; the vulnerability of women with disabilities to domestic and gender-based violence; and the neglect or pathologizing of the sexuality of women with disabilities, especially those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. All those vulnerabilities were aggravated for women in rural and other resource-poor areas.

70. Around the world, mainstream women's movements and women's organizations typically lacked knowledge of disability and routinely ignored women with disabilities. In China, there were few organizations of persons with disabilities, and their leaders were usually not women. The rights of women with disabilities affected all rights of women and must therefore be integrated into the women's rights movement.

71. Without adequate social support for families, persons with disabilities were primarily cared for by the women in their own families. When family guardianship deprived persons with disabilities of their autonomy, conflict or even mutual harm might occur between the two sides. It was clear that a new social contract on care was needed to advance disability rights and avoid the marginalization of women.

72. To address those issues, One Plus One had taken action in China, which included promoting sexual and reproductive health, combating violence and providing training on the Convention to women's organizations and parents' organizations. To further those efforts, it first of all wished to propose that Governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and academics should work together to gather comprehensive, up-to-date, diverse and finely-tuned data relating to women and girls with disabilities. Second, Member States should strengthen support systems for women with disabilities, promote the transition of care from substituted decision-making to supported decision-making and provide resources to reduce the vulnerabilities of women with disabilities in the face of domestic and gender-based violence. Such efforts should be strengthened in particular in rural and other disadvantaged areas. Third, Member States should expand the space for civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, and States and civil society should include and empower women with disabilities who were leaders and activists to enable their full participation in the public sphere. Overall, States and international foundations needed to make more rights-based financial investments, civil society needed to be able to participate fully in policymaking and monitoring, and persons with disabilities needed to receive equal recognition before the law.

73. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility), panellist, expressed her gratitude to the Secretary-General for the trust that he had placed in her as a woman with disabilities from a developing country fulfilling a voluntary mandate and said that her objective as Special Envoy was not to monitor progress but rather to promote the rights of persons of disabilities from a gender perspective. One fundamental pillar of her mandate was to raise awareness regarding the intersection of the rights of persons with disabilities with the 2030 Agenda.

74. She was also grateful to the Department of Public Information for its ample support in producing audiovisual materials. What was decided in the world of disability should not be limited to the United Nations, but should have a reality on the ground thanks to global networks. Various informational materials had been developed in collaboration with United Nations agencies and civil society organizations to raise awareness about children with disabilities and promote quality inclusive education.

75. She had also participated in various working groups on inclusive education, the right to vote, political participation, universal health care, migration, adoption, and accessible architecture from the perspective of the rights of persons with disabilities. All those issues had incorporated a cross-cutting gender perspective. She had also actively participated in the reports of the Secretary-General on disability.

76. **Ms. Mendoza** (Mexico) said that her country would continue cooperating with the various entities of the United Nations on the issue of disability, as well as with civil society organizations. In the Human Rights Council, Mexico had recently launched an initiative to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the

rights of persons with disabilities for another three years, which had received unanimous support from Council members.

77. During the Conference, the need for disaggregated data, including by disability, had been emphasized. Her delegation stressed the importance of using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability to facilitate data comparison at the international level. In Mexico the National Council for Persons with Disabilities currently possessed data on approximately 4 million persons with disabilities. The implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/165 on inclusive development for persons with disabilities should help to promote the adoption of the Washington Group questions, including by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

78. **Ms. Degener** (Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) said that, in her eight years as Chair of the Committee, overall States parties had shown determination in implementing the Convention. Civil society, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities, had become more knowledgeable about the human rights system, and great improvements had been made with regard to national human rights institutions. The challenge for the second decade of the Convention would be cooperation among those stakeholders in implementing the Convention and support from the United Nations system in that regard.

79. **Ms. Devandas Aguilar** (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) said that the panel discussion was a clear example of cooperation, coherence and the avoidance of duplication of efforts to maximize impact. The Conference had become a space for substantial discussions, allowing for the celebration of achievements as well as deep reflection on the challenges ahead.

80. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility) said that her new mandate, which was not even one year old, marked a timely opportunity to challenge the United Nations system to become more complementary and to express greater solidarity. Civil society was to be commended for the excellent response it had demonstrated whenever called upon.

81. **Ms.** Zhiying **Ma** (One Plus One Group for Disability) said that One Plus One was pleased to see the important discussions at the Conference, especially those on national fiscal space and international cooperation. The Government of China had been devoting more resources and investments to disability work. Recalling that human rights and development were never separated in the Convention, she called for more investment in disability work and more rights-based work with the participation of civil society.

Agenda item 7: Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

82. **The President** drew the attention of the Conference to a document containing the text of three draft decisions that had been circulated to all delegations.

Draft decision 1 entitled: Venue and timing of the twelfth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

83. *Draft decision 1 was adopted.*

Draft decision 2 entitled: Resources and support for the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

84. *Draft decision 2 was adopted.*

Draft decision 3 entitled: Request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

85. *Draft decision 3 was adopted.*

86. **Ms. Ito** (Secretary of the Conference) said that the Bureau-elect of the Conference for the period 2019–2020 would come from the following regional groups: President-elect, Ecuador (Latin American and Caribbean Group); and Vice-Presidents-elect, Singapore (Asia-Pacific Group), Hungary (Eastern European Group) and Finland (Group of Western European and other States). The African Group was still in the process of confirming its Vice-President-elect.

Agenda item 8: Closing of the meeting

87. **Ms. Moreno González** (Ecuador), Acting Vice-President, speaking on behalf of the President of Ecuador, Mr. Lenín Moreno, said that the participation of civil society was an invaluable asset for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. Her country had been appointed to the Bureau for the period 2019–2020 in recognition of the advances in policies and programmes for persons with disabilities that it had developed. Ecuador was committed both to the universalization of the Convention and to the establishment of mechanisms to ensure equal opportunity, political participation, universal accessibility and the real inclusion of persons with disabilities, while protecting them from discrimination.

88. The programmes and policies developed in accordance with the principles of the Convention must

be monitored and evaluated in order to assess the progress made as well as the remaining challenges. The principle of "nothing about us without us", which had given the Committee its participatory spirit, must be preserved.

89. **Mr. Khiari** (Tunisia), speaking as Vice-President, said that he welcomed the unprecedented participation by Member States, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and civil society representatives in the Conference. The Bureau had made it a priority to ensure the inclusive participation of different stakeholders. During the preparatory process, all relevant stakeholders had been consulted to ensure that the Conference responded to the real needs of persons with disabilities. The contribution of Tunisia to the work of the Bureau as Vice-President built upon its accelerating efforts to promote and protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

90. Although the work of the Conference was reaching its end, the collective task was far from finished. Persons with disabilities still suffered from discrimination and marginalization across the world, which hindered the full implementation of the Convention and the fulfilment of State obligations under the 2030 Agenda. In that context, cooperation needed to be intensified at all levels, through the sharing of good practices, experiences and challenges. Tunisia was continuously working towards that goal and looked forward to working with different partners to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure the realization of their full capacities.

91. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Vice-President, said that the Conference had become a valuable bridge between Governments and civil society in safeguarding and strengthening the rights of persons with disabilities. While progress had been made in certain areas, persons with disabilities still faced a multitude of challenges, including multiple forms of discrimination, lack of access to justice, negligence, abuse and violence. Many good strategies for addressing those challenges had been proposed, including the promotion of high-quality disability statistics and the disaggregation of data by disability status. Such data would assist informed policymaking and enable the adequate and effective allocation of resources for the implementation of the Convention.

92. **Mr. Heusgen** (Germany), speaking as Acting Vice-President, said that the Conference was important not only for delegations but also for persons with disabilities and civil society. The Bureau had stood for the inclusion of civil society and the participation of members who lived with disabilities. With their involvement, the outcomes reflected the real needs. He hoped that the next Bureau would continue to include civil society in the Conference.

93. **The President** said that the eleventh session of the Conference had benefited from the participation of the Secretary-General, who had committed to strengthening the implementation of the Convention through a system-wide policy of mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in all activities of the Organization. The United Nations should take a leadership role in achieving the full inclusion and effective participation of persons with disabilities.

94. In the context of the anniversaries in 2018 of the Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it should be remembered that the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities was a crucial prerequisite for achieving the goal of human rights for all. The deliberations over the past three days had shown how much more could be accomplished when a collective effort was made and persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were included in all decision-making processes. Under the overarching theme of leaving no one behind through the full implementation of the Convention, the Conference had emphasized the importance of strengthening the inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda by operationalizing the role of persons with disabilities as agents of change for sustainable development.

95. There had been a record number of speakers, about 140, in the general debate and more than 35 high-level speakers in the ministerial segment. Organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society representatives and other stakeholders had made valuable inputs. An important point from the interactive dialogue just held with mandate holders and other stakeholders was the need to strengthen United Nations action on the rights of persons with disabilities as a consistent system-wide policy. The more than 100 side events had contributed to raising awareness about the key principles of the Convention and the rights of persons with disabilities in global action. The Conference had elected nine experts to serve on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities starting from 1 January 2019, and it was pleasing to see the Committee move towards gender balance.

96. The civil society forum held the day before the opening of the Conference had been dedicated to a general discussion of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities regarding the implementation of articles 4.3 and 33.3 of the Convention. At the eleventh session, the implementation of article 4.3 had been strengthened by following the practice established

in the previous year of including persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all segments of the Conference. In the past two years, the Bureau, under the leadership of Bulgaria, had placed a stronger emphasis on the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, as well as national human rights institutions and other stakeholders, in all deliberations related to the implementation of the Convention. The role of the Conference as a useful platform to forge partnerships among different stakeholders with a view to promoting the principles of the Convention and contributing to the realization of all human rights for persons with disabilities had been reaffirmed.

97. Issues requiring more attention and action on the part of States parties and the United Nations system had been highlighted, such as the need to ensure that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would lead to the realization of all human rights of persons with disabilities and their empowerment and inclusion in society on an equal basis with others. Disaggregation of data by disability was another issue that needed to be addressed urgently in order to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first.

98. The Conference had been successful in achieving its main goal of ensuring the inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the implementation of the Convention, thus contributing to the achievement of sustainable development for all. Although it was the last Conference for the current Bureau and for Bulgaria as President, the Bureau remained fully committed to the Convention and would continue to promote the effective inclusion and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities as equal partners in decision-making at all levels.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.